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# AGAWAM

## ADVERTISER NEWS

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## Mayor seeks to waive 'pour license' fees for 2021

By **Shelby Macri**  
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AGAWAM – Mayor William Sapelli is proposing waiving the 1,500 dollar alcohol establishment fees for certain businesses that were affected by COVID-19 throughout the year. The waived fee will apply to licenses that are classified as on-premises or "pour licenses."

The City Council President Chris Johnson and Mayor Sapelli are sponsoring a resolution and emergency preamble at the Monday, Dec. 21 Agawam City Council meeting. The votes from that meeting were not available due to the early holiday press deadline.

The Dec. 21 meeting was scheduled to be the last city council meeting of the year and the last meeting before the licenses go into effect. The resolution sponsored

by Johnson and Sapelli states to waive the collection of certain alcohol license fees in 2020, it also declares that an emergency exists and allows the council to act on it and make a vote.

"Typically it has to go on the agenda as new business, then be discussed, and moved to old business on the next agenda," Sapelli said. "This is the last meeting of the year and we had to get this done in one meeting rather than two." Sapelli decided to waive the fee entirely due to the closure of business during the pandemic and the restrictions they had to follow when they reopened. He further explained that this waiver will help restaurants, banquet halls, and clubs as they have suffered even during re-opening.

"Some of these licensees have been forced to close or substantially curtail their businesses

during the pandemic," Johnson said. "The mayor and I feel that the one-time waiver of these fees will help these businesses during their time of need. The goal is to get through the pandemic with the least amount of local businesses and local jobs."

Local and small businesses and restaurants have suffered during their closures and this waiver is an acknowledgment of the hard year these businesses have dealt with.

Package stores had remained open during the pandemic and received fewer limitations and are not included in the waiver. Package stores are currently being forced to close by 9:30 p.m. and non-package stores that sell alcohol must cease alcohol sales at 9:30 p.m. to comply with the governor's order from Nov. 6.

Sapelli sought to waive the fee

last month, but wanted to see if things would look up for these businesses this month. The Liquor License Commission unanimously voted to advise waiving the fees on Oct. 21, Sapelli explained that he wanted to wait because Dec. is typically a busy month for banquet halls and restaurant due to large group parties.

The additional seating restrictions and guidelines that have been placed on restaurants and banquet halls due to the upcoming holidays and expected spikes, is a further reason that encouraged Sapelli to waive the fee for these businesses. "This is a small way to help businesses, we're business friendly and we feel their pain," Sapelli said. "Now they can keep that money in their till, it's not a lot but it can help their expenses." The Mayor's Office and City Council is business friendly

and felt that this waiver would help to show that.

Last Friday, Sapelli said he was confident that the waiver would be approved by the council and the council would show support for the affected businesses.

There will be a revenue loss from the waiver. Sapelli estimates the town will lose about \$55,000. To absorb the loss, Sapelli said there is extra money in different areas of the budget, as well as some CARES Act funds and grants that can help as well.

"We're in a good position, we can certainly cover a short fall of 55,000 from other areas where we saved money," Sapelli said.

He says the town government is in favor of helping out the businesses who have suffered this year and this holiday season, as they will decide on waiving the fee for licenses starting on Jan. 1, 2021.

## Town remains in 'red' as local infections rise

By **Gregory A. Scibelli**  
[gscibelli@turley.com](mailto:gscibelli@turley.com)

AGAWAM – Heading into the holiday week, Agawam remained in the "red" with a rising COVID-19 infection rate, according to statistics released by the Department of Public Health last Thursday, Dec. 17.

As of press time, Agawam had reported a total 1,247 total case of COVID-19 in the community. The community's number of new cases had slowed to a crawl and was at about 600 total cases with few active cases prior to October.

When the statewide surge began in October, Agawam saw its caseload creep up. Agawam went into the "red" or the high-risk category as classified by the state. When the formulas for determining risk-level were re-done, Agawam moved back into the yellow, or moderate risk category. Agawam has since moved back into the red during the past two weeks. Agawam's last reported average daily incidence rate per 100,000 is 52.4, a higher number than the Dec. 10 numbers. There have been 30,302 tests administered in to the town and Agawam was scheduled to host a COVID-19 testing site at Six Flags New England on Monday. The town-sponsored test site was only for Agawam residents.

Agawam previously had test sites, but they were available to any resident of Massachusetts.

Agawam is currently on break for the Christmas and New Year's holiday, but continued surge could result in a change in the current hybrid model going full remote. Agawam spent two weeks learning remotely in November, but returned to the hybrid model just before Thanksgiving.

Agawam also recently went through a town hall closure as a result of two employees contracting the virus as well as a perceived positive test by Mayor William Sapelli.

The mayor would later find out he had a false positive, though that was not the case with the other employees and town hall was closed for almost a week. It would later be re-opened, but it is still not open to the public unless a person requests an appointment.

Sapelli gives occasional updates on how the town is responding to the virus on the town's website.

The town will likely be making announcements in the coming months about sites where residents can get the COVID-19 vaccines. Vaccines will soon be coming to the town, likely to be distributed at pharmacies like CVS and possibly the Stop & Shop. Both businesses are signed up to be vaccine distribution sites. There are currently two approved vaccines that are being rolled up, one from Pfizer, and the second, late last week, from Moderna.

## Winter begins



Bobby Johnson runs a town snowblower on one of the sidewalks on Main Street in the aftermath of the first major snow-storm of the season last Thursday. PHOTO BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

## Local man sentenced for defrauding VA hospitals

BOSTON – A vendor for several Veterans Affairs medical facilities was sentenced today for defrauding the VA by creating false invoices and reports for medical gas inspections that never took place.

Chester Wojcik, 49, of Agawam, Mass., was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge Mark G.

Mastroianni to two years of probation. In August 2020, Wojcik pleaded guilty to one count of wire fraud.

Wojcik, as the owner of Alliance Medical Gas Corporation, engaged in a scheme from May 29, 2014, through March 5, 2015 to defraud the VA by creating false invoices and reports for medical

gas inspections that never took place. Medical gas supply systems deliver piped gases, including compressed air, nitrous oxide, nitrogen and carbon dioxide into operating rooms, recovery rooms and patient rooms. Medical gas supply systems must be inspected and maintained regularly to en-

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Eucharistic Adoration at St. John's

AGAWAM – All are welcome and invited to join us at St. John the Evangelist Church, 833 Main Street, for Eucharistic Adoration, Wednesdays, 12 noon to 5:45 p.m. with Holy Mass at 6:00 p.m. Come and spend some time in quiet prayer with our Lord Jesus Christ, present in the Eucharist.

Digging out



A snowblowing machine makes its way down Springfield Street clearing out the sidewalk following last week's storm that dumped a little more than foot of snow locally. PHOTO BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

Discount tickets available for 2021 Big E

WEST SPRINGFIELD – Give the gift of fair fun in 2021 and put The Big E under the tree.

Big E advance discount tickets, Value Passes, and Midway and Cream Puff vouchers are available for sale, just in time for holiday giving!

Get your tickets to the 2021 Big E, which takes place Sept. 17 to Oct. 3, online at TheBigE.com and at the Box Office, which is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday through Dec. 23.

Ticket options available are:

Single Day admission tickets – \$12 adults/\$8 children 6-12

17-Day Value Passes – \$40 adults/\$20 children age 6-12. This offer includes four FREE Giant Slide tickets for each Value Pass sold.

Opening Day tickets (good for use on Sept. 17 only) – \$10

Midway Magic Vouchers – \$25

Six-pack of Big E Cream Puffs - \$25

All tickets, passes and vouchers are “print at home” documents, making the gift a perfect last-minute shopping option. To learn more, visit [www.TheBigE.com/holidaytickets](http://www.TheBigE.com/holidaytickets).

The 2021 Big E will be jam-packed with food, entertainment, and so much more! Visit TheBigE.com to sign up for emails and connect on social media to be the first to receive exclusive information.

DEFRAUD ■ from page 1

sure the safety of patients and medical professionals, and to prevent gas leaks, explosions and other safety hazards. Wojcik failed to perform scheduled inspections of medical gas systems at VA facilities in Sioux Falls, S.D., Tuskegee, Ala. and Montgomery, Ala. and later lied to VA facilities and federal investigators about the offense. Wojcik was paid \$8,981 by the VA for services that his company did not perform.

United States Attorney Andrew E. Lelling; Christopher Algeri, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Inspector General, Northeast Field Office; and Joseph R. Bonavolonta, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston Field Division made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorney Elysa Q. Wan of Lelling's Health Care Fraud Unit prosecuted the case.

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Scarf donations sought

AGAWAM – Loaves and Fishes is in desperate need of White socks, Scarves, Hats and Gloves. Most especially since COVID-19 hit us all last March, the number of folks in need of extra help in our communities has increased dramatically. You may bring your generous donations to the Sacred Heart Parish Center at 1061 Springfield Street in Feeding Hills. There will be a basket in the entry way just as you come through the first set of doors. Donations will be accepted through February 2021. Please call Pastoral Minister Deb Briancesco RN with any questions at 786.8200 ext. 3.

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**Middle School • TUESDAY, JAN. 26 / 6 PM EST**

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# Baby's First Christmas

## 2020





**Anderson Wayne Merrill**

October 14, 2020

**Parents:** Derrick Merrill and Brihana Hersom, Hampden  
**Grandparents:** Rick and Caroline Hersom, Agawam  
Linda Chabot, Hampden, Clifford Merrill, Enfield, CT



**Emerson Anne Smith**

October 25, 2020

**Parents:** Hayden and Rachel Begley-Smith, East Longmeadow  
**Grandparents:** Gerald Jr. and Kerry Smith, Agawam  
Catherine Smith, Agawam, Jeffrey and Bernice Begley, Palmer  
**Great Grandparents:** Gerald Sr. and Anne Smith, Agawam  
David Burgess, Palmer



**Francesca Maria Ferrentino**

July 18, 2020

**Parents:** Frankie and Marissa Ferrentino, Longmeadow  
**Grandparents:** João and Maria Dos Santos, Ludlow  
Francesco and Angelina Ferrentino, Longmeadow  
**Great-Grandparents:** Noemia Rosa Tereso, Ludlow  
Mattea Maria Gisolfi, Longmeadow



**Declan Thomas Costa**

June 1, 2020

**Parents:** Anthony and Megan Costa, Agawam  
**Grandparents:** David and Despina Costa, Agawam  
Thomas and Louise Moriarty, Feeding Hills

## Tree collection set for first week of 2021

AGAWAM – The Department of Public Works is pleased to announce that Republic Services will be providing a collection of Christmas Trees during the week of January 4th – 8th.

\*Christmas trees will be collected on the same day as scheduled trash collection. Please be aware that the regular trash truck will not be collecting trees, a separate truck will be running for the collection of trees.

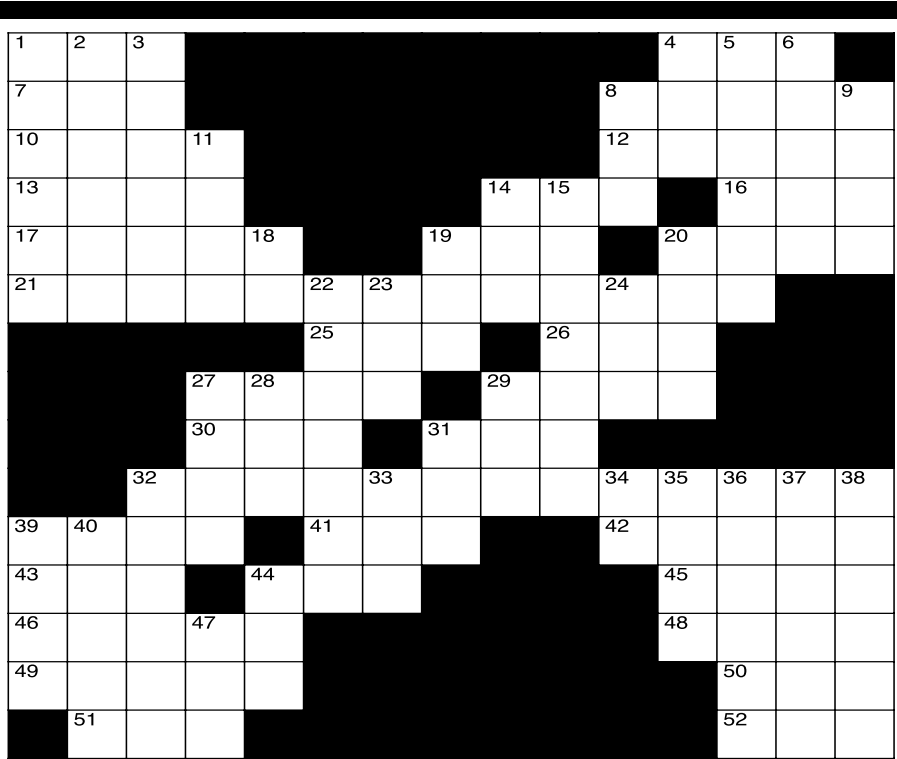
\*Christmas trees 7' or larger must be cut in half and placed on the tree belt no earlier than 7am of the collection day listed above.

\*Trees in plastic bags will not be collected.  
\*It is not the responsibility of the hauler to dig out trees buried in the snow due to plowing or excessive snowfall prior to the scheduled collection days.

\*In the event of a snow delay during the scheduled collection week, residents should make alternative arrangements to recycle their trees at the Bondi's Island Landfill. Collection routes for trees will not be re-scheduled.

\*Residents may dispose of trees prior to or after the scheduled collection days at the Bondi's Island Landfill.

PLEASE  
RECYCLE  
THIS  
NEWSPAPER



### CLUES ACROSS

- Crow species
- Partner to flow
- Male offspring
- Sedate
- Orange beverage
- Pair of small hand drums
- 12th month of Jewish civil year
- Former Pirates star Jason
- Computer company
- Made angry
- Beverage container
- Charlize Theron film "\_\_\_ Flux"
- Localities
- Consume
- Don't know when yet
- Bed style
- Make a low,
- continuous sound
- Wrath
- Pollinates flowers
- Association
- Prejudice
- Unhealthy
- Hasidic religious leader
- Distinctive philosophy
- Short-term memory
- In a good way
- Emperors of Ethiopia
- Imaginary line
- Of barium
- One's sense of self-esteem
- Man who behaves dishonorably
- Monetary unit

### CLUES DOWN

- Rear of (nautical)
- He minds the net
- Ring-shaped objects
- When you hope to get there
- Young children
- Beloved hobbit
- Pigpen
- Wish harm upon (Scottish)
- Scrooge's phrase "\_\_\_ Humbug"
- One more
- A ballplayer who only hits
- Once vital TV part
- Sixth month of Jewish civil year
- Advantage
- Type of tree
- Luke's mentor \_\_\_-Wan
- Life stories
- Vase
- Tiny
- Package (abbr.)
- A photog's tool
- Wood
- One of the six noble gases (abbr.)
- Pueblo people of New Mexico
- Wild goats
- A way to comply
- Horatio \_\_\_, British admiral
- Actress Leslie
- Sir \_\_\_ Newton
- Pouch
- Have already done

## Writing contest deadline extended

AGAWAM – The Agawam Cultural Council is sponsoring a writing competition for all Agawam Public School students. The topic is "Facing the Challenges of the Coronavirus - How did you do it?" Entries will be accepted from October 15, 2020 through December 31, 2020, and the winners will be chosen by members of the Agawam Cultural Council. Monetary prizes will be awarded to first, second, and third-place winning entries. The requirements for entry into this competition can be found on the ACC website and by contacting the librarians for each of the schools in Agawam. If you have any questions, please contact Mary Jane Augusti at (413) 241-7196 or by email to: [maryjane.augusti@gmail.com](mailto:maryjane.augusti@gmail.com).

For more information on the activities and virtual offerings of the Agawam Cultural Council during the current pandemic stay-at-home order, please visit their web site, at: [www.agawamcc.org](http://www.agawamcc.org).

The Agawam Cultural Council is an all-volunteer local partner of the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency, and is funded, in part, by the MCC. The ACC is charged with bringing engaging, entertaining, and educational events and opportunities in the arts, humanities, and sciences, to children and adults from Agawam and the surrounding communities.



# Opinion

## OUR VIEW

### Yes, Virginia. There is a Santa Claus!

No one could have realized it back in 1897, but that's when the New York Sun published what was to become an iconic part of local journalism history. The Sun printed what is now the most widely read letter to a newspaper. It was sent by an 8-year-old New York City girl named Virginia O'Hanlon. The response to her letter by editorial writer Francis Pharcellus Church is a message of love, magic and hope. Considering this past year, we imagine many readers could use a generous serving of that next to a plate of Christmas cookies. So, here is the full text of that historic letter:

Dear Editor,

I am 8 years old.

Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus.

Papa says, "If you see it in The Sun, it's so."

Please tell me the truth, is there a Santa Claus?

Virginia O'Hanlon

Virginia, your little friends are wrong.

They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole truth and knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! How dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus! Thank God he lives and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay 10 times 10 thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.



FAITH MATTERS

## Ordinary Faith

By Ken Blanchard

Thoughts often turn to the Virgin Mary at this time of year. We each probably have our own ideas about that, but most can agree that Mary was just a poor Jewish girl. She was an ordinary human being, just like you and me, even though her response to God's makes her a role model of faith, obedience, servanthood, and discipleship. According to Christian tradition, God chose an ordinary human being to be the vessel for the birth of the Son of God. "How can this be?" Mary asks. "Nothing will be impossible with God," the angel says to her. In the same way, you and I – ordinary human beings – are called to do something extraordinary too. We are called to live as God's children, to show the way of hope, peace, joy and love. God called ordinary people then, and he calls ordinary people now.

Christian tradition tells us God didn't go to the religious authorities and government leaders, but to humble, lowly shepherds to announce the birth of the Messiah. Then, in an ordinary stable, a baby was born to two ordinary people. Everyone heard the call of God, each in their own way, and they responded in faith. The call of God comes to ordinary human beings, like the shepherds, like Mary; like Joseph; like you and me. And it is through ordinary people with ordinary faith – not only Christian faith – that the extraordinary happens. God chooses the simple to confound the wise. God chooses the weak to shame the strong. God chooses the ordinary to do something extraordinary. Mary un-

derstood clearly that even though she was not perfect, she was blessed. So are we.

God acts in ordinary human lives. God intervenes in miraculous ways, and also in small, subtle ways over time...whatever works best in getting our attention. We might respond initially in awe or fear or wonder or amazement. We might eventually work our way through our questions to understanding and commitment and faith. With God, nothing is impossible. Ordinary faith.

God's call can intrude into our ordinary lives in any number of ways, but it always demands a response. That response is captured in Luke 1:38: "Mary said, 'I am the Lord's servant! Let it happen as you have said.'" Perfect submission. Ordinary faith. Despite her surprise, despite the misgivings and concerns she undoubtedly had, Mary accepted it, and submitted to God's will. That's also how we should respond to the surprises in our own lives, especially the surprising call of God, bringing us to places we never dreamed we would be, to do things we never thought we could do, to be the kind of people God is calling us to be. It means we need to relinquish control. We don't really control anything anyway – even our own lives – so we might as well say: "Not my will, but yours be done." All it takes is ordinary faith.

Sometimes we find ourselves surrounded by indescribable joy. Sometimes we are called to go through excruciating pain. Sometimes we are overcome by events that are heartbreakingly sad.

FAITH I page 11

## YESTERDAY'S HOMETOWN NEWS

### No Christmas assembly this year

In September of 1956, some of us 63's had Dorothy Harris as their sixth-grade teacher. She had been at the Springfield St. school but the new Cooper St. high school in 1955 made room in the Main St. school for sixth graders. Rehearsing for the Christmas assembly went better for her when Raymond Wright and I were sent out into the hallway because we couldn't sing in tune. Neither of us minded, the hall was definitely more fun.

In 1957 the 63's got big-time, you know, one teacher for each subject. Our English teacher, Esther Dillon, the young lady Jimmy Piersall wanted to stay with back in '54, had us rehearsing for the Christmas Pageant. The characters had no lines. All they had to do was walk out on the stage when their scene occurred. Mary, Joseph, Wise Men, shepherds etc. An 11-year-old boy was to be the narrator. For two weeks he had to practice for ten or 15 minutes at the end of English class. Two pages of typewritten material. It wasn't fun.

My second-best memory of that Christmas Pageant was when Gary Cole

sang O Holy Night. A 12-year-old who could sing like an adult. Every Christmas we think of Gary who now lives up in Huntington. We like to hear Rufus Wainwright on the computer singing O Holy Night in French. Beautiful.

When Gary was in fifth grade, he was brought around to other schools to sing at Christmas time. At AHS he was in the school musical all four years. As a freshman he was a cadet in "Best Foot Forward." Next year he was Pappy Yokum in "Li'l Abner." As a junior he was Sitting Bull in "Annie Get Your Gun." Then in his last year he was the lead playing Conrad Birdie in "Bye Bye Birdie." No standing out in the hall for Gary. He is still singing and his church group will be on Channel 15 at 4 p.m. on Christmas Eve. Wonder if his three great grandchildren will be watching. I know we will.

If you're homebound and guest-free this Christmas, try getting Rufus Wainwright, Celine Dion, Andrea Bocelli or other great voices on the computer. You won't catch COVID and it might cheer you up. Merry Christmas to all and Stay Safe.



Walt Willard



Gary Cole



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#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

must include a name, address, and daytime telephone number for author verification purposes. We do not publish anonymous letters. All letters are subject to editing for content and length. The deadline is Monday at noon. Please send letters to Agawam Advertiser News, care of Turley Publications Inc., 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069, or e-mail aan@turley.com.

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## COA conducting community assessment

AGAWAM – The Agawam Council on Aging, in partnership with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and representatives from several municipal departments and committees, is seeking input from older adults and people who provide care for older adults in Agawam.

The Age & Dementia Friendly Agawam working group has developed a survey to gather input from older adults and their caregivers on a number of aspects of the community that make it a good place in which to grow old. With the results of this survey, and public forums that will be scheduled after the first of the year, the group will develop a Community Assessment and Action Plan.

This report will be submitted to the AARP and Dementia Friendly Massachusetts, providing the town with official designation as an Age and Dementia Friendly Community and a road map for changes that can be made to the social and built environments to make the Town a more welcoming place for people of all ages and abilities.

“Aging is not new to many communities who have been seeing their demographic make-ups getting older,” acknowledged Michael Squindo, Director of the Agawam Council on Aging, “and given all that has been going on with COVID, now is the perfect moment to understand how these changing demographics will affect the way we plan and meet the needs of an aging population now spanning multiple decades within the demographic of ‘older adults’. Meeting the needs of the older residents inherently makes a community better for residents of all ages; whether it is improved infrastructure and access to services, or using technology to provide greater access to public meetings and social opportunities, everyone will be better served when we apply an Age-Friendly lens to understanding the needs of our community.”

The Age and Dementia Friendly Agawam project is part of a larger Age Friendly Pioneer Valley initiative that the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission is leading with funding from the Tufts Health Plan Foundation. Through this initiative, PVPC is providing technical assistance to communities in the PVPC service area (Hampden and Hampshire Counties) to help them become Age and Dementia Friendly and to complete community assessments and action plans.

The initiative also includes quarterly meetings of an Age Friendly Pioneer Valley Collaborative, where individuals from communities working on Age and Dementia Friendly activities can share information and experience and learn from experts in the “eight domains of livability,” the World Health Organization’s model for the aspects of the social and built environments that contribute to a community’s Age Friendliness.

“We are excited to be assisting the communities in our service area to become more Age and Dementia Friendly,” commented Becky Basch, Senior Planner with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. “The COVID-19 pandemic has accentuated issues such as social isolation and transportation that many older adults face in non-COVID times. We believe it’s a critical time for all communities to understand how the social and built environment can support the needs of older adults so that they can participate more fully in their communities.”

The Agawam Livable Community Survey is posted on the Council on Aging website at <https://www.agawam.ma.us/560/Council-on-Aging-Senior-Center> and is also available in hard copy form (contact the COA staff at 413-726-2835 to request a hard copy). The online survey will be available in Spanish and Russian by Jan. 1 and will be open through the end of January 2021.

All respondents may enter a drawing to receive a Stop and Shop gift card once the survey is closed. For more information on the Age Friendly Community effort, contact Becky Basch at [bbasch@pvpc.org](mailto:bbasch@pvpc.org).

Survey Link: <https://forms.gle/p2jQsMJjurZFMJst6>



Six Flags is extending its Holiday in the Park Lights event to Jan. 3. SUBMITTED PHOTO

## Six Flags New England extends its holiday season

AGAWAM – Six Flags New England—the Holiday Capital of New England, will be extending its Holiday in the Park Lights through Sunday, January 3 in accordance with the state of Massachusetts’ guidelines. Due to popular demand guests can now experience an additional week of holiday fun.

Holiday in the Park Lights is free to all 2020 Members and Season Pass holders with discounted day-tickets available at [sixflags.com/newengland](https://sixflags.com/newengland).

Holiday in the Park Lights features more than one million dazzling lights, beautifully adorned Christmas trees and an extraordinary synchronized light display;

Enchanting characters, warm s’more fire-pits and state-of-the-art décor throughout the display;

This one-way magical walk-thru surely delights guests of all ages with the sights, sounds and delicious tastes of the holiday season; and

While the property’s world-class rides and attractions will remain closed for the 2020 season, Six Flags New England is thrilled to welcome guests back to the park and warm their hearts this holiday season on this whimsical

light trail that is over one mile long!

All event attendees will need to reserve their visit at [sixflags.com/reserve](https://sixflags.com/reserve).

The parks’ safety plan, which the company developed in consultation with epidemiologists, meets or exceeds federal, state, and local guidelines for sanitization, hygiene, and social distancing protocols. To learn more about the property’s comprehensive safety plan visit <https://www.sixflags.com/newengland/plan-your-visit/safety-protocols>.

Six Flags Season Passes and Memberships are currently on sale. Members can enjoy priority park entry and tremendous discounts of up to 50 percent on nearly all food and merchandise all season long. Gold Plus, Platinum, Diamond, and Diamond Elite levels are available featuring all the perks of a Season Pass plus other benefits including admission to all Six Flags branded theme and waterparks, preferred parking, and points that can be redeemed for free food, merchandise, and special experiences. Visit the Membership Sales Center or go online to [sixflags.com](https://sixflags.com) for more information and to sign up today.

## Freedom Credit Union to support Pioneer Valley USO with matching donations

SPRINGFIELD – Throughout the month of December, Freedom Credit Union will partner with its members and the local community to raise funds to benefit the Pioneer Valley USO. Freedom will match total donations made through Dec. 31 up to \$2,500.

The mission of the USO (United Service Organizations) is to strengthen America’s military service members by keeping them connected to family, home and country throughout their service to our country. The Pioneer Valley USO, located at Westover Air Reserve Base in Chicopee:

- Provides more than 102,000 lbs. of food to over 3,200 individuals annually through the Emergency Food Pantry
- Supports more than 600 families with holiday food baskets for Thanksgiving and Christmas annually
- Sends more than 500 care packages to deployed military men and women around the world
- Is funded entirely by private donations, sponsorships and grants
- Supports both Westover Air Reserve Base in Chi-


copee and Barnes Air National Guard Base in Westfield.

Donations can be made to Freedom’s matching drive online at [bit.ly/393WCzo](https://bit.ly/393WCzo).

“We wanted to do something to help care for those who sacrifice so much for our freedom,” said President Glenn Welch. “The Pioneer Valley USO was set up in the 1940s to help local service families in need by serving meals and providing food through a pantry at Westover Air Reserve Base. With all the challenges this year, the organization has experienced a dip in donations, and we’d like to help fix this.”

“During this holiday season, there are about 220,000 American men and women on active duty in 100 countries who will not be home for the holidays,” said Allan Tracy, executive director, Pioneer Valley USO. “We appreciate Freedom’s generosity in soliciting and matching donations to help relieve some of our service members’ stress by helping to ensure their families are cared for.”

For information about the full range of services offered by Freedom Credit Union, visit [freedom.coop](https://freedom.coop).



# Early Deadlines

for all PUBLIC NOTICES...

*to run the week of  
December 21-25, 2020:*

- **Thursday, Dec. 17 at NOON**  
The Register, Sentinel,  
The Wilbraham-Hampden Times,  
Agawam Advertiser News,  
Quaboag Current
- **Friday, Dec. 18 at Noon**  
Barre Gazette, Country Journal,  
Ware River News  
The Journal Register
- **Monday, Dec. 21 at noon**  
Town Reminder,  
Chicopee Register and  
The Holyoke Sun

*Happy Holidays!*

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*Happy New Year!*

*to run the week of  
December 28 -  
January 1, 2021:*

- **Wednesday, Dec. 23 at noon**  
The Register, Sentinel,  
The Wilbraham-Hampden Times,  
Agawam Advertiser News,  
Quaboag Current, Barre Gazette,  
Country Journal, Ware River News  
The Journal Register
- **Monday, Dec. 28 at noon**  
Town Reminder, Chicopee Register  
and The Holyoke Sun

## EARLY DEADLINE For All Advertising & CLASSIFIEDS

To celebrate  
**CHRISTMAS,**  
the Advertising  
Deadline will be  
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for the week of  
**Dec. 22-25**

To celebrate  
**NEW YEAR,**  
the Advertising  
Deadline will be  
**NOON -  
WED., DEC. 23**  
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**Dec. 29-Jan. 1**



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# Harmony returns for the new year

AGAWAM – The second half of the seventeenth season of the Agawam Cultural Council's popular Applause Series gets underway on Friday, January 8, 2021 with the return of the captivating acoustic rock duo CO2. A videotaped recording of their January, 2019 Applause Series performance will be presented on the Town of Agawam's public access channel (Agawam TV15) at 7:00 pm and streamed from the "Watch" button on [www.agawammedia.tv](http://www.agawammedia.tv) for those residing outside of Agawam. This performance is also being shown on the Town of Southwick's TV15 at 7pm and streamed from the "Watch Channel 15" button on [www.southwickma.org/channel-15-public-access](http://www.southwickma.org/channel-15-public-access). Those who wish to watch on a smart device at a different time should email [r.kadis@comcast.net](mailto:r.kadis@comcast.net) for a link for the performance.

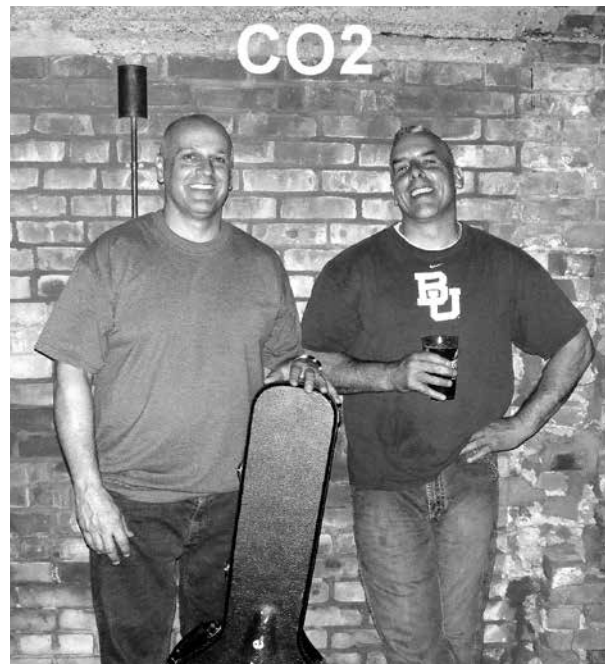
Vocalist Mike Scott and guitarist/vocalist Mark Wassung, known for beautifully blended harmonies, will perform hits from the Everly Brothers, Simon & Garfunkel, Johnny Cash, Neil Diamond and others. Scott and Wassung have more than 30 years of experience singing and playing guitar in front of audiences. Motivated by the love and enjoyment of music, they have performed together as CO2 at venues throughout Massachusetts and Connecticut. The duo's success continues to grow, and this show will demonstrate the reasons why.

Production sponsors for CO2 are CHH Engraving Pro-

motional Marketing and Kyle and Roberta Miller. The Agawam Cultural Council also thanks the Agawam Special Police, Elaine Carlson, Hampden County Sheriff Nick Cocchi, and OMG, Inc. for their generous support as Applause Series season sponsors.

In lieu of the free will donations the Agawam Cultural Council (ACC) normally accepts at the conclusion of all its events, (which support fully 40% of the cost of each performance), the council asks viewers to consider making a properly "socially distanced" donation to support efforts to "Give Back to the Community" by visiting the ACC web site [www.agawamcc.org](http://www.agawamcc.org) and clicking on the green "Donate" button. A check in any amount, payable to the Agawam Cultural Council, may also be sent to: Agawam Cultural Council, Town Hall, 36 Main Street, Agawam MA 01001.

For more information on the activities and virtual offerings of the Agawam Cultural Council during the stay-at-home order, please visit their web site, [www.agawamcc.org](http://www.agawamcc.org). The Agawam Cultural Council is an all-volunteer local partner of the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency, and is funded, in part, by the MCC. The ACC is charged with bringing engaging, entertaining, and educational events and opportunities in the arts, humanities, and sciences, to children and adults from Agawam and the surrounding communities.



Acoustic rock duo CO2 will ring in the new year as part of the Agawam Cultural Council's popular Applause Series on Friday, Jan. 8, 2021. Mike Scott and Mark Wassung's beautifully blended harmonies will be broadcast on the Town of Agawam's public access channel and streamed at 7 p.m. SUBMITTED PHOTO

## COVID Q&A: Answers about new vaccine

SPRINGFIELD – Now there is really something to celebrate this holiday season when it comes to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The CDC - after the FDA's decision on Friday to grant emergency authorization for the coronavirus vaccine - has formally signed off on a recommendation from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices for Pfizer's vaccine to be used in people 16 and older. The CDC recommendation comes after the FDA's decision on Friday to grant emergency authorization for the vaccine.

However, most of the general public will have to wait until April to be vaccinated as healthcare workers and those at risk are to receive the shot first.

"The COVID-19 vaccines hopefully can bring some normalcy back to our daily lives in the later part of next year, depending on how many will get vaccinated. We expect that at least in the short term, people will still need to continue to wear masks and follow social distancing. While the vaccine is shown to be very effective in preventing symptomatic infection, it is not 100% and is still unclear how much it can prevent asymptomatic infection that allows disease transmission," said Dr. Armando Paez, chief, Infectious Disease Division, Baystate Health.

"With the current surge, the availability of vaccine will definitely help those vulnerable populations at risk of severe infection and death from COVID-19. There are still deaths occurring attributed to COVID-19 in Massachusetts, up to 60 in one day recently, although the cumulative deaths are not as high as during the first surge," he added.

Still public support is split on the vaccine: 60 percent of people said they were likely to get the shot, a recent Pew poll found, while more than 20 percent were strongly opposed.

It is still unknown exactly how many people need to be vaccinated against or infected with COVID-19 to achieve "herd immunity," noted Dr. Paez.

"Experts estimate it will be in the range of 70-80%. We know that within 90 days following COVID-19 that reinfection is unlikely, however, reinfection has been reported after that. We do not know at this time for how long the vaccine will offer protection from COVID-19. Based on available data, the Pfizer vaccine is safe and very effective. Most side effects like injection site reaction, fatigue and headache resolve in 1-2 days. I believe one needs to look at the vaccine in the context of potential complications from COVID-19 illness compared to the side effects of the vaccine, then will realize how this vaccine can prevent serious illness for you and those around you," he said.

The following Q&A will answer many of the questions you may have about the vaccine:

Q: Who will be first to get the Pfizer vaccine in Massachusetts?

A: Among those who will receive the vaccine first as part of "Phase One" are front-line health care workers and long-term care staff and residents. They will be followed by police, firefighters, and emergency medical workers, home-based health workers, and other "non-COVID facing" health workers, according to

the state's distribution plan. As for "Phase Two" priority groups, it will include residents with two or more chronic illnesses, essential workers such as teachers, transit employees and food, sanitation, public works, and public health workers, according to the state's priority list. After that will come adults who are 65 and over and individuals with one co-morbidity making them at higher risk for COVID-19. The vaccine will be available to the general public beginning in April as part of "Phase Three."

Q: Where can I get the vaccine?

A: While details are still being worked out, according to Massachusetts state officials, the vaccine will be administered to patients at hospitals, community health centers, and private medical offices. Pharmacies, including CVS, Walgreens, Walmart, and OSCO, will also have access to the vaccine and will be able to vaccinate their customers. And, officials say the vaccine "will likely also be made available to local health departments for vaccinating their local residents at public clinics." Massachusetts residents can check the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) interactive website, [vaccinefinder.org](http://vaccinefinder.org), to see where a COVID-19 vaccine will be available at a public health clinic. For more information, you can also contact your primary health care provider, local pharmacy, or local health department to see if, and when, they will have the vaccine available.

Q: Do the COVID-19 vaccines have side effects?

A: As with any medicine or vaccine, there will likely be some side effects with COVID vaccines. Based on data reported for the initial trials of both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines in adults, there do not appear to be serious adverse events or safety issues related to these vaccines. Both Pfizer's and Moderna's vaccines do seem to cause mild or moderate side effects for up to 50% of people within the first few hours and days of both the first and second doses of each. These side effects include fever, headache, muscle aches, fatigue, and soreness and/or redness at the site of injection in the arm. The CDC and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health will be closely monitoring reports and the latest news can be found on their websites. The CDC and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are encouraging the public to report side effects through the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System.

Q: How effective is the vaccine?

A: So far, in trials that have involved tens of thousands of healthy adult volunteers, both the Pfizer and the Moderna vaccines show that they are 90-95% effective in preventing COVID-19 infection. It is still too early to know how long the effectiveness will last.

Q: Does the vaccine prevent transmission to others?

A: The vaccine will provide a 94 to 95% chance that you will not get COVID 19. However, it does not prevent transmission to others if you are already carrying the COVID-19 virus. You may be spreading the virus without knowing it if you do not have symptoms. Therefore, it will still be necessary to wear a mask and practice social distancing even af-

ter getting the vaccine.

Q: Can I get infected from the COVID-19 vaccine?

A: No, it is not possible to get COVID-19 from vaccines. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines use RNA that encodes the spike protein of the virus - not the "live" virus itself to stimulate immunity. None of the COVID-19 vaccines can cause COVID-19.

Q: Do I need to get the COVID-19 vaccine every year like the flu vaccine?

A: It is not known yet how often a COVID-19 vaccine will have to be administered.

Q: Will the COVID-19 vaccine be free?

A: Currently, there is no cost to get the vaccine.

Q: How will the vaccine be given?

A: Currently the vaccine will be an injection, the same way flu shots are given. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines require 2 injections. The Pfizer vaccine has been authorized for emergency use and this requires a second dose 21 days from the first dose. The Moderna vaccine, which is yet to be authorized by the FDA, will require a second dose 28 days after the first dose.

Q: If I had COVID-19, do I still need to get the vaccine?

A: Research is still being conducted on how and if the vaccine should be given to those who have already had the virus. Based on available data, the vaccine does not harm those who had COVID-19 when given. We do know that you should continue following safety guidelines, including wearing a mask and social distancing. As reinfection is less likely to happen to those people within 90 days of COVID-19, the Pfizer vaccine may be given only after 90 days since the diagnosis.

Q: Do I get to choose which brand of vaccine I receive?

A: At this time, the Pfizer vaccine is the only choice until another vaccine has been approved for emergency use by the FDA. Eventually, when there are several different safe and effective vaccines available, there may be choices.

Q: Is there a minimum age to receive the vaccine?

A: Until recently, vaccine trials did not include children under the age of 16. Because of this, the Pfizer vaccine is only authorized for individuals 16 years and older. Pfizer has now included children 12 and older in current, ongoing trials. When the results for these trials become available in the future, there may be a change in vaccine recommendations.

Q: How long does it take for the vaccine to become effective?

A: It usually takes a few weeks after receiving the final course of a vaccine for the body to mount an effective immune response.

Q: Will people still have to wear a mask and social distance after getting the vaccine?

A: Yes. The current safety precautions will still be important including wearing masks and social distancing. Here are some reasons why:

- As the vaccine rolls out, there will still be high levels of infection in our communities.
- You will most likely need two doses of the vaccine in order to be highly protected.

Available data show that only 52% respond to 1 dose of the Pfizer vaccine.

• Even though you have been vaccinated, it is still not 100% effective, although close to it. It still unclear how much asymptomatic infection can be prevented by vaccination, and thus the ability to transmit the virus if you get infected.

Q: What was the process of developing the vaccine?

A: All vaccines go through a similar testing process. Once products are created in the laboratory and show evidence of safety and effectiveness in animal models, they may proceed through a progressively escalating series of human clinical trials in volunteers. Progress to each "phase" of trials depends on success in the previous one. Phase I studies are small scale human trials designed to assess safety and appropriate dosing. Phase II trials are larger human studies that assess safety in more depth and laboratory measure of effectiveness. Phase III trials are large clinical studies that seek to address safety and efficacy and are generally placebo-controlled studies, meaning that some volunteers get vaccine, and some get a non-vaccine injection.

Q: What were the length of trials? How long were people followed after the vaccination?

A: The length of phase III vaccine trials, which are the large-scale ones to determine safety and effectiveness, is based generally on reaching enough "endpoints" to show that the virus is safe and working. The main "endpoint" is the number of COVID infections that occur in each group - (vaccine and control) and how the vaccine can prevent infection.

Q: What are the outcomes of the clinical trials?

A: The Pfizer clinical trials showed that the vaccine is 95% effective in preventing infection. No serious adverse events were noted in these trials.

Q: What are the vaccines made of and how do they work?

A: None of the COVID-19 vaccines in development in the U.S. use the "live" virus that causes COVID-19. Both the Pfizer and the Moderna vaccines rely on a new technology called mRNA, the synthetic messenger RNA (mRNA). While mRNA technology is new, it has been studied for more than a decade and the COVID-19 mRNA vaccines have been carefully tested for safety. Not all vaccines work the same way. Most commonly, vaccines are made from inactivated viruses or weakened live viruses. Vaccines use antigens (substances that prompt immune responses) to train the immune system to identify threats and produce antibodies. The COVID-19 vaccines being tested by Pfizer and Moderna use the mRNA that code proteins using the host cells' own protein-making process to make proteins, trigger an immune response, and build immunity to SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19).

For more information on Baystate Health, visit [baystatehealth.org](http://baystatehealth.org) and follow us on our social media channels:



# Winter Wonder drive-thru: Where the spirit of Christmas comes alive

WEST SPRINGFIELD – Eastern States Exposition is proud to showcase Campiti Ventures' Winter Wonder Drive-Thru throughout the holiday season, a safe, socially distant, family-friendly event that is in compliance with Massachusetts' guidelines for Phase 3, Step 1.

The Winter Wonder Drive-Thru, "Where Christmas Comes Alive," takes place on The Big E Fairgrounds through Jan. 3 and is a COVID-19 safe, audio and visual spectacu-

lar featuring lighting, special effects and 3D holograms.

Attendees will drive through the 3-acre Better Living Center building and enjoy an immersive, holiday display from the comfort of their car. Effects include a "clean" snowstorm, singing snowmen, Santa's elves and Santa taking to the sky. Every visit is uniquely different, allowing visitors to come back to see more special effects with each pass through the experience.

"I wanted to bring some holiday cheer to a year that has been so difficult for so many people," said creator Frank Campiti. "Visitors can experience the magic and beauty of the Christmas season in a safe environment."

This Christmas display follows a highly popular Halloween drive-thru in the town of Suffield which brought more than 1,400 cars through the display in just two days.

The event runs through Jan. 3 with

daytime and nighttime showings. Tickets are on sale now at a cost of \$15 per vehicle. Attendees enter Gate 1 of The Big E Fairgrounds and proceed to Door 5 of the Better Living Center. The event is drive-thru only, so attendees do not interact with people outside of their own vehicle.

Winter Wonder hours and ticket information are available at: [EasternStatesExposition.com/winterwonder](http://EasternStatesExposition.com/winterwonder)



The Big E has attempted to offer alternative events this year due to the closure of the main fair this year.



The Big E is doing its own version of Bright Nights this year. SUBMITTED PHOTOS

## Hampshire Sheriff alerts residents to ID spoofing phone scam

Staff report

REGION – Hampshire County Sheriff Patrick Cahillane is alerting residents to a phone scam being perpetrated in the Pioneer Valley.

The scam, commonly known as "phone spoofing" or "caller ID spoofing," is when a scammer uses caller ID spoofing technology to impersonate the phone numbers of local businesses or government agencies in attempt to acquire money or some sort of personal information.

On Monday, Dec. 7, Sheriff Cahillane

said his office had received several calls from area residents reporting that they had received calls from a person identifying themselves as an employee of the Hampshire Sheriff's Office seeking money due to court charges, and then requesting payment via gift cards.

"The Hampshire Sheriff's Office will never, never, call private citizens and demand payment or accept payment of any kind over the phone," Sheriff Cahillane said. "If you receive such a call, the best tactic is to simply hang up. Anyone receiving such a fraudulent call might also consider

contacting their local police department, or notifying my office at 413-584-5911. The FBI website – [www.fbi.gov](http://www.fbi.gov) – also has information about how to avoid such scams."

Here are some additional tips from the Better Business Bureau on what to do if a scammer calls:

- Hang up – don't press any buttons and, if you received a voicemail, don't call the scammer back. We all like to have the last word, but returning the phone call may just give the scammer information they can use.
- Don't trust caller ID – scammers have

technology that lets them display any number or organization name on your screen.

• Never give out any financial information – if you did not initiate the call, do not provide bank account, credit card or Social Security numbers over the phone unless you have thoroughly done your research and verified the caller.

"The duty of the Hampshire Sheriff's Office is to protect public safety," Sheriff Cahillane added. "We want everyone to stay safe, and to remember that my office will never make these kinds of phone calls."

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# SPORTS

## SCHOLARSHIP

# Smith makes swim to Tennessee

By Tim Peterson  
Sports Correspondent

AGAWAM — When Summer Smith was six-years-old, one of her friends wore the Agawam Piranhas swimsuit to her house. Smith really wanted one of her own.

That's how Smith, who's a senior at Agawam High School, began her outstanding swimming career.

"One of the reasons why I decided to join the Piranhas swim team was because I really liked their swimsuit and I wanted one of my own," Smith said. "I just fell in love with the sport after that."

Smith swam for the Piranhas swim team, which is run by the Agawam Parks and Recreation Department for three years. She then became a member of the U.S.A. swim team. Smith is currently a member of the Blue Fish Swim Club and has never swum for the high school team.

"I've been swimming for the Blue Fish Swim Club for the past three years and it has definitely helped me a ton," Smith said. "Coach (Nick) Rice has made me a better person and a better swimmer. I can't thank him enough for helping me."

While Smith normally competes in several different events at her swim meets, her favorite event is the 400-individual medley. It's the combination of the backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly, and freestyle.

"My two best strokes are probably the backstroke and butterfly," Smith said. "I've been doing those two strokes for a very long time and they come natural to me."

Because of COVID-19, Smith has competed in just one meet during the past eight months.

"It has given me some extra time to do some out of water training," she said. "I did compete in a recent meet and it went very well. It was my first meet since last March." After graduating from Agawam High School next spring, Smith will be moving to Knoxville, Tennessee where she'll be joining the University of Tennessee women's swim and diving team.

"The culture of the swim team at the University of Tennessee is better than I could have ever imagined," Smith said. "All of the coaches are outstanding, and all of the swimmers work very hard. It's a perfect fit for me."

Smith recently signed her Na-

SMITH | page 9



Summer Smith was one of three Agawam athletes to recently sign to play college athletics. She will swim at the University of Tennessee next year. SUBMITTED PHOTO

## SOCCKER

# Soccer changes affected approach to game

By Tim Peterson  
Sports Correspondent

REGION—The MIAA made several rule changes to the sport of soccer this past fall due to COVID-19.

It took a couple of matches for the players, coaches, and referees to get used to the new modified rules.

"It did take some time for the players to get used to the new rules. We're hoping to go back to soccer without modifications next year," said Monson girls' varsity soccer coach Eric Degnan. "The players deserve a lot of credit. You also have to give the referees a lot of credit as well. It wasn't very easy for them either."

Granby girls varsity soccer coach Robert Weaver was happy his players had the opportunity to play some matches this fall.

"The girls were very happy just to be getting together, practicing and playing soccer while following the modifications," Weaver said. "At Granby, we had great backing from the school's administration, school committee, and health department."

One of the rule changes was the elimination of throw-ins. When the ball crossed the touchline, the restart was a kick-in, which was the same as an indirect kick. The ball was placed on the spot on the touchline where the ball went out of bounds or behind it.

SOCCKER | page 9



Girls soccer adjusted to the modified rules of soccer, which included no throw-ins and goalies could not punt over the half line. FILE PHOTOS



Boys soccer had to do without head balls, a big part of the attack game.

## WINTER UPDATE

# Several unknowns for winter sports season

By Gregory A. Scibelli  
gscibelli@turley.com

REGION — In Western Massachusetts, winter sports are scheduled to begin in early January, but that is pending the creation of a new schedule and the Pioneer Valley Interscholastic Athletic Conference forming geographic "bubble" leagues for basketball and hockey, as well as swimming.

In November, the PVIAC agreed to go ahead with winter sports, but made a number of rulings:

- Compete in a bubble that will limit contact with fewer athletes (schools).
- Start date for winter sports January 4, 2021 through February 20, 2021
- The scheduled amount of games will be: Team sports (Basketball, Swimming, Ice Hockey) 10-12 Skiing 5-6 contest
- No independent varsity contests, only those given by schedulers.
- Spectators for Indoor Games TBD.
- Out of season coaching: There will be no out of season coaching during the Winter Season
- Strongly recommend no captains practices.

With the recent rollout of a vaccine as well as a second one now in the pipeline that could ac-

celerate the vaccination process, it is unclear if decisions made about fans will be revisited at some point.

Another decision that must be made is what schools will be participating in the winter season.

Changes that have already been made for the season include the addition of Southwick's school committee did not allow the school to participate in the fall season, but has agreed to support the winter season. Southwick has boys and girls basketball as well as ice hockey.

Belchertown, while it will allow swimming and basketball, hockey is not being allowed due to the fact the UMass practice rink, their home ice, is not available. Belchertown's school committee confirmed other options for Belchertown would be in communities that currently in the red status for being labeled "high-risk" for COVID-19 spread. Belchertown is one of the towns not allowed to play other schools that have the red designation.

Holyoke High School, which ceased its fall season on Oct. 21, is set to participate in the winter season with basketball and swimming, but can only do so if it gets out of the red by Dec. 24 and remains out of the red until the

WINTER | page 9



## Sports

# T-Birds announce massive teddy bear donation

SPRINGFIELD – The Springfield Thunderbirds' Foundation is pleased to announce a donation of over 1,000 teddy bears and stuffed animals to local charitable partners, the culmination of a successful Drive-Thru Teddy Bear Toss presented by Teddy Bear Pools & Spas, that was held on Saturday, Dec. 12 outside of the Mass-Mutual Center in downtown Springfield.

This morning, the Thunderbirds' mascot Boomer, along with staff members, made deliveries of hundreds of stuffed animals to Square One, Center for Human Development (CHD), Boys and Girls Club of Springfield, and the Boys & Girls Club, Family Center in Springfield.

"Our holiday celebrations are looking much different this year, but the Springfield Thunderbirds have proven that with a bit of creativity and careful planning, the children in our community can still experience the magic of the season," says Kristine Allard, Vice President of Development & Communications, Square One. "We are so grateful to Nate Costa and the entire Thunderbirds community for keeping the tradition of the Teddy Bear Toss alive. Our children will be overjoyed!"

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the annual Teddy Bear Toss event was much different than previous years. Instead of tossing the bears onto the ice after the first T-Birds first goal during a home game in December, fans brought their new teddy bears or stuffed animals down and 'tossed' them out of their vehicles as part of the Drive-Thru Teddy Bear Toss at the Mass-Mutual Center on the corner of Main St. and Bruce Landon Way. Boomer, the Nice-box Icebox, and front office staff were present to collect donations and properly package and sanitize them. Those that couldn't make it that day also donated at the Thunderbirds office, at Teddy Bear Pools & Spas in Chicopee, the Springfield Visitor Center, or at New Valley Bank's new headquarters located in Monarch Place in downtown Springfield.

"The T-Birds and their loyal fans have again stepped up to bring holiday joy to

children and families receiving services in CHD programs across western Massachusetts," said Ben Craft, CHD's Vice President of Community Engagement. "We deeply appreciate the Thunderbirds organization's partnership and strong commitment to our community, and we can't wait to get back to the arena to cheer them on when it's safe to do so."

The virtual and drive-thru version of the Teddy Bear Toss kicked off on #GivingTuesday, the annual global movement that encourages people to do good and support nonprofits, encouraging fans that couldn't physically attend the event to donate to the Thunderbirds' Foundation and sponsor a bear. Over 250 bears were sponsored by local and national supporters of the Teddy Bear Toss through donations to the Thunderbirds' Foundation, including a significant number donated by Balise Auto Group.

"We are amazed and grateful at the outpouring of support for the Drive-Thru Teddy Bear Toss" said Thunderbirds President Nathan Costa. "Teddy Bear Toss is a staple event for the Thunderbirds, and our fans came out in full support. We can't thank our fans, partners, and those that donated to our Foundation enough to be able to bring smiles to children at this time of year."

The Thunderbirds extend a special thank you to all of their partners that stepped up and were able to make this event a reality, including: Teddy Bear Pools & Spas, Balise Auto Group, Western Mass News, the Springfield Business Improvement District & downtown Visitor's Center, New Valley Bank & Trust and Dunkin'. The Thunderbirds also would like to thank their teddy bear delivery partner, BMW of West Springfield.

The Thunderbirds Teddy Bear Toss was established in 2016, whereby the Thunderbirds' first goal in the annual Teddy Bear Toss game results in a celebration of bears being thrown onto the ice. Since starting the tradition four seasons ago, the Thunderbirds have contributed more than 10,000 bears to local Springfield charities.



Despite the pandemic conditions, the Springfield Thunderbirds still held its annual teddy bear drive. SUBMITTED PHOTOS



The Thunderbirds mascot tosses a teddy bear from a donor's car.

## Senior photos from fall season wanted

By Gregory A. Scibelli

gscibelli@turley.com

The fall season is nearing its end and Turley Publications has been all over the action.

But with this unpredictable season there have been temporary or in some cases, permanent stoppages in play, and we still want to help feature your athletes, especially those who are seniors this year.

We continue to ask for help on this season in order to bring the best coverage we can possibly manage and fill our pages

with names and color.

We know that fans will be limited to the home crowds, but that is where you all come in.

If you attended any senior games and would like to see those photos in our papers, we welcome submitted photos from those events and information about graduating seniors who participated in Fall 1 sports.

We also welcome any additional information about other major achievements. Send any and all information and photos for inclusion to sports@turley.com.

### SOCCER I from page 8

Ludlow boys' varsity soccer coach Greg Kolodziej really didn't mind the elimination of throw-ins.

"We have benefitted over the years from having a player who could throw it far," Kolodziej said. "You could create more scoring chances on more restarts with the kick-in."

There were also no head balls allowed.

"I think the rule change that affected the game the most was elimination of head balls. I've never seen so many well-executed shoulder balls in my life," Kolodziej added. "But there were a lot of good scoring chances missed by all the teams due to not being allowed to head the ball."

Players were not allowed to make intentional physical contact with an opposing player.

"We always stress the importance of not committing reckless and needless fouls," Kolodziej said. "If the health situation is under control, I do think all the modified rules will be changed back next season."

Goalkeepers weren't allowed to kick, punt dropkick, or throw the ball in the air beyond the midfield line.

If the ball did travel in the air be-

yond the midfield line without touching a player, the resulting restart was an indirect kick for the opposing team from the spot it crossed midfield. "I strongly disliked the rule where the goalie could not punt, or goal kick the ball over half," said Ware boys varsity soccer coach Jesse Trzpit. "To me, it didn't make a lot of sense to begin with, I didn't see how it benefitted anyone's safety and it also took a large advantage away from our team. Our starting goalie consistently kicks the ball over half which gives us an opportunity to move the ball up field more so than other ways. Our backup goalie also has the ability to do this."

All of the high school soccer matches were played in four ten-minute quarters instead of two twenty minutes halves.

A couple of the other rule changes were corner kicks were indirect kicks, no time-outs will be allowed, and there were no rebounds allowed on penalty kicks. Coaches, players and referees wore masks during the game.

Everyone is hoping to have a normal high school soccer season in the fall of 2021.

### WINTER I from page 8

season starts in January. It is possible the school will start late.

Other changes and decisions are still pending, though many schools have already opted to participate.

Pathfinder will participate in winter sports, but must find another venue due to the fact their gymnasium is currently being used as a cafeteria.

While the PVIAC has not made an offi-

cial ruling on whether fans will be allowed in arenas, the MIAA's current guidance is to allow up to 40 percent of a gymnasium's capacity. However, the number of game participants (players, coaches, officials, etc.) count toward that 40 percent. Some schools, like the fall, could bar fans altogether in an effort to lower the spread while the current surge is still on.

### SMITH I from page 8

tional Letter of Intent during a signing ceremony held in the Agawam High School gymnasium.

Hope Santaniello, who'll be joining the U.R.I. women's soccer team, and Sarah Ross, who'll be a member of the UMass-Lowell cross country and track teams, also took part in the signing ceremony.

"This is a very exciting day for these three-outstanding student-athletes and their families," said Agawam Mayor Bill Sapelli, who attended the signing ceremony. "These three girls have put in a lot of hard work and dedication to make it this far. You learn so many life lessons by playing a sport."

Smith's recruiting process with the Vols coaching staff began during the summer entering her junior year.

"I was really impressed with everything the coaches at Tennessee had to offer," she said. "I've built a very good relationship with the head coach. When I made my official visit there, I was just blown away. The whole atmosphere is amazing."

The head coach of the University of Tennessee swimming and diving team is Matt Kredich. Ashley Jahn is the associate head coach of the Vol's women's swim team.

The Tennessee swim team hold their home meets at the Jones Aquatic Center, which was completed in 2008.

The Vol's won the NCAA Division 1 National Title one time in 1978, but they've

captured a total of 50 individuals NCAA titles during the past 75 years.

They are also members of the Southeastern Conference (SEC) and have won a total 11 SEC team titles, 151 individuals titles, and 44 relay titles.

Summer is hoping her parents, (Shawn & Teresa), along with her younger brother, Collin., will be making many trips to Knoxville to watch her compete for the swim team during the next four years.

"My family has always been very supportive of me," she said. "I'm looking forward to having them come watch me swim in college."

While the school colors at Agawam High School are orange and black, the school colors at the University of Tennessee are orange and white.

"My whole wardrobe is orange, so I won't be changing very much next year," Smith said. "It's kind of funny that two school's basically have the same colors."

Smith has already qualified for the Olympic Team Trials in 2021, which are going to be held in Omaha, Nebraska.

"My ultimate goal is to qualify for the Olympic team," Smith said. "I'm just going to do my best at the Olympic trials."

While qualifying for the Olympics is her long-term goal, Summer Smith is really looking forward to being a member of the University of Tennessee swimming and diving team during the next four years.



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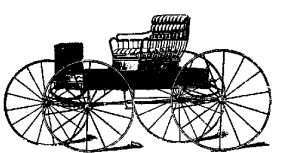
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# Free COVID-19 testing at HCC extended until March 31



The mobile COVID-19 testing site at HCC will continue operating through March 2021. SUBMITTED PHOTO

HOLYOKE — Free “Stop the Spread” COVID-19 testing at Holyoke Community College has been extended until March 31, 2021, according to the Holyoke Board of Health.

Drive-through testing at HCC is conducted six days a week in parking lot H near the western entrance to the Donahue Building on the college’s main campus, 303 Homestead Ave.

HCC has been serving as a “Stop the Spread” drive-through testing site since Aug. 26 to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Drivers are asked to enter the campus from Homestead Avenue, turn left onto the Campus Road and proceed to parking lot H. There will be signs and parking attendants on site to manage the flow of traffic.

The HCC testing site is open Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m.; and Tuesday and Thursday from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Testing is free to all Massachusetts residents, and conducted on a first come, first serve basis. There are no appointments and no referral is necessary. Turnaround time for results is typically four days or fewer.

More information on all of the Stop the Spread test sites across the state can be found at: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/stop-the-spread>

Please Note: Testing may sometimes be cancelled due to inclement weather. Be sure to visit the Holyoke Board of Health website for up-to-date information on cancellations: <https://www.holyoke.org/departments/board-of-health>

# Help a friend through ‘wish box’

AGAWAM – This has been a challenging year for so many. With the pandemic, loss of jobs, health concerns and isolation, many are struggling just to make ends meet. If you know someone that may need a little help this holiday season, please submit a request to the e-mail address below, identifying their hardship and need. We will be granting three wishes this holiday season to spread goodwill and provide

them with some relief during a very trying time. Perhaps it is a rent payment they are coming up short, a heating bill, food for the holidays, gifts for the children. All entries need to be submitted by Dec. 20. Once all entries are received, we will reach out to you for their contact information to provide them assistance. Please e-mail your request to: [wishbox33@gmail.com](mailto:wishbox33@gmail.com).

# Baystate Health guidelines amid increase in COVID-19 cases in the community

Staff report

SPRINGFIELD – In response to rising COVID-19 cases in the community, Baystate Health – for the safety of patients, caregivers and visitors – is instituting on Wednesday, Nov. 18 a fluid new visitor policy based on the Massachusetts Department of Public Health’s tiered guidelines for the health and safety of patients, caregivers and visitors.

The tiers – also referred to as zones – are based on the number of COVID-19 positive patients in a city or town and how prevalent the virus is. Red zones are considered at the highest risk for COVID-19 followed in decreasing risk by yellow, green and gray zones.

Baystate Medical Center/Baystate Children’s Hospital in Springfield, Baystate Noble Hospital in Westfield, and Baystate Wing Hospital in Palmer at this time are in the “red zone” and will allow no patient visitors. Baystate Franklin Medical Center in Greenfield is in the “green zone” and will allow one visitor.

The numbers will be reviewed weekly and the visitor policy may change in accordance with risk levels and the prevalence of the virus.

Exceptions to the visitor policy at all hospitals, with numbers of persons depending upon what zone the hospital is in at the

time, include:

- Parent/guardian for COVID-19 positive and negative children
- Support person for labor, delivery and duration of hospital stay
- Hospice/end-of-life or for life-changing diagnosis
- Support person for patients with disabilities.

If in a zone that allows visitation, the hours continue to be daily from noon to 8 p.m.

Baystate Medical Practices and Baystate Health Centers are also following a tiered guideline based on the region’s risk level.

Additionally, with the recent increase of COVID-19 cases in the community, Baystate Health is transitioning patient care appointments to virtual visits (telehealth or video) whenever applicable.

In place of in-person visits, Baystate Health supports and encourages keeping connected – especially during the holidays when wanting to stay in touch with family and friends in the hospital – the use of virtual visits through technology such as iPhones, iPads and other devices.

For an up-to-date listing of visitor policies at all Baystate Health hospitals and outpatient sites throughout Franklin, Hampshire and Hampden counties, visit [BaystateHealth.org/COVID19](http://BaystateHealth.org/COVID19).

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